



Three Rivers Ranger District
Kootenai National Forest
Troy Montana
295-4693



November 2016

THREE RIVERS NEWS

WHITEBARK PINE RESTORATION EFFORTS



In a continuing effort to restore whitebark pine, a declining 5 –needle pine tree the District collects and cages whitebark pine cones. As soon as the snow melts and there is access to the high elevation sites we check to see if there is going to be a cone crop, if so we gather our resources and cage the cones as soon as possible. The purpose of the cage is to protect the seeds inside the cones from getting eaten by the animals that love these high protein snacks. The cage stays on the cone until we return in the fall to gather the now mature cone. The cones are sent off to the Coeur d'Alene Nursery to extract the seed to be used for planting and restoration of this valued species. In the picture on the left a climber is headed up the tree to install the cone cages off the Northwest Peak Trail. In the picture on the right the cones are safely inside the cage and are able to mature before heading to the nursery to become seedlings. This fall the District with help from the Yaak Valley Forest Council THRIVE group collected the whitebark pine cones from the trees off the Northwest Peak Trail.



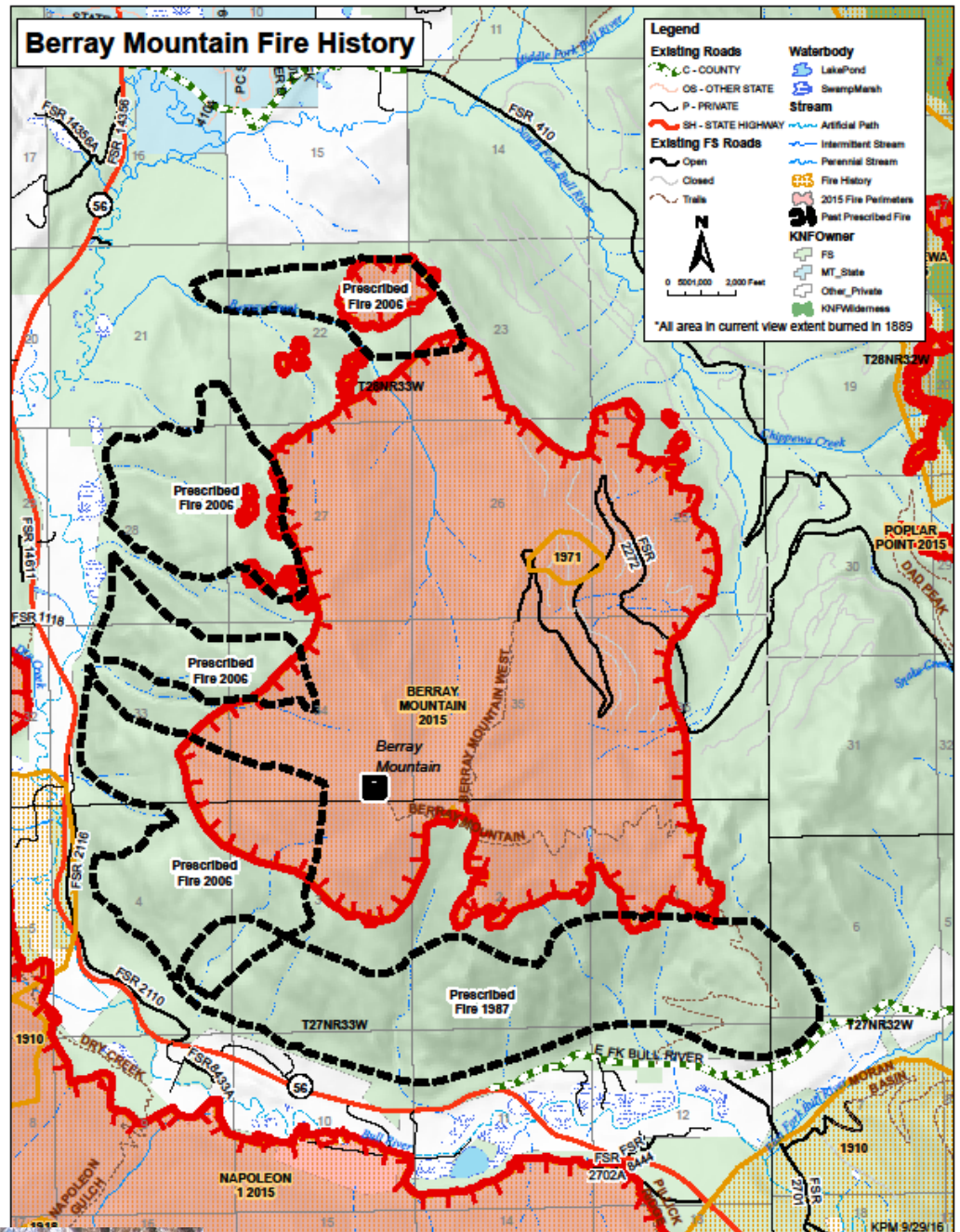
Youth Conservation Corp (YCC)

—The Troy and Libby Ranger District's YCC crews on a tour of Chapel Cedar Mill in Troy. If you are 15 –18 years old you can apply to work on this crew next summer. See your local high school counselor or call the District office at 295-4693 for more information. Thanks to Chapel Cedar for continuing to make this a great opportunity for our youth.

THE BENEFITS OF WILDLAND FIRE

If you drive along the Bull River Highway between mile markers 1 and 15 you may notice the fire scars from last summer's fires. Fire creates a variety, or mosaic, of habitats for animals. It burns intensely in some areas, cooler in others, and leaves scattered unburned areas. Fire is an important and inevitable part of what takes place on America's wildlands. It actually restarts critical natural processes vital to life itself. In places, fire breaks down organic matter into soil nutrients. Soil, rejuvenated with nitrogen from ash, provides a fertile seedbed for plants. With less competition and more sunlight, seedlings grow quickly. Many plant species depend on fire, for example huckleberry and lodgepole pine are species that have adapted to fire and must experience it to survive, regenerate, and thrive. The cones of lodgepole pines are sealed with pitch, fire melts the pitch and the seeds release. Aspen, birch and willow sprout from their roots after fire. Without fire, seeds and spores of certain plants, for instance mushrooms and arrowleaf balsamroots can lie dormant in the soil for decades, waiting for fire. This spring the abundance of morel mushrooms in the fire areas was one of the benefits of fire that we enjoyed on the forest.

The Berray Mountain Fire History map shows the wildfire and prescribed fire history of this area. The prescribed burns completed by the Cabinet Ranger District between 1987 and 2006 helped to slow the spread of the 2015 Berray Mountain fire. When the 2015 fire burned to the edge of the 2006 prescribed burn the fire dropped to the ground and almost completely stopped its progression down the mountain.



Lodgepole pine grows at middle and high elevations in our area. Here the winters seem longer than at low elevations because snow stays on the ground much later. Although surface fires occur in these forests, crown fires also occur every hundred years as seen in the Berray Mountain and Napoleon Fires from 2015. This year in these burned areas you can see many plants and seedling sprouting from the ash of last year's fires, see the picture to the left. Many scientists think that lodgepole pine – subalpine fire forest are gradually becoming older and more uniform without fire. This means less habitat variety and increasing risk of large fire. So although wildfire can be a threat to people and property it is also a natural process that can be beneficial to plants, trees and humans.

September 2016 Berray Mountain post fire picture



Bug Collection Day -This picture was taken in May, at the base of Mount Sentinel in Missoula. Pictured are Mike Laffoon, Chris Lundin, Craig Helmrick, Andrew Haggarty, Joyce Evelyn, Bruce O'Brien, Hunter Kashdan, and Montana Biocontrol Coordinator Melissa Maggio-Kassner. On a one-day trip they collected 5,000 biocontrol agents called *Mecinus janthiniformis*. These bugs are the natural enemy of Dalmatian toadflax. The bugs were brought back and released on the Three Rivers and Libby Ranger Districts to help control this noxious weed.

Troy's Old Fashion 4th of July Parade



What species of deer is this?

*(See answer on page 4)



2016 Three Rivers Ranger District Scholarship winners from Troy High School- Seniors Anada Jones, Erin Landis and Kasey Faur were each awarded a \$300 scholarship to attend a college or university this fall. The District has been awarding this scholarship to Troy High School students for over 30 years. To raise money for these scholarships district employees hold various fund raising events throughout the year including the Scholarship Breakfast, various food auctions and a Christmas wreath sale.

Forest Service Mission: To sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations.

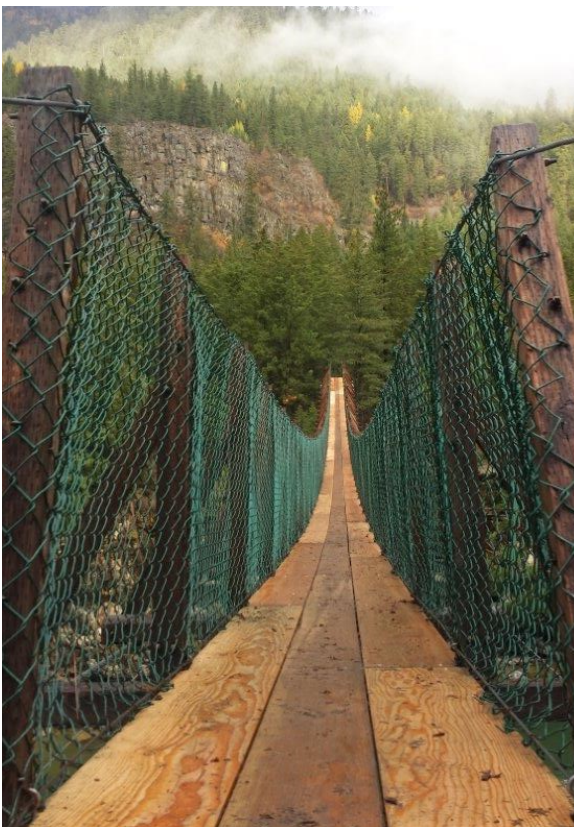
RECREATION



District Employees learning about the Life Flight program.



Forest employees are having lunch at Ross Creek Cedars after a hard day of work clearing and fixing the nature trail from the December 2015 rain events.



The recreation crew taking a break after clearing the Rock Candy Trail in the Yaak.

Kootenai Falls Swinging Bridge in October 2016 the recreation crew replaced the decking on the bridge.

Starry Goat Project (Callahan Planning Area)

The Three Rivers Ranger District of the Kootenai National Forest has developed a Proposed Action for the Starry Goat Project. The Project Area is located immediately west of Troy, Montana and runs from the Kootenai River west to the boundary between the Kootenai and Idaho Panhandle National Forests. The proposed action includes timber harvest and associated fuels treatments, prescribed burning, watershed and recreation improvements. A decision on this project is scheduled for winter 2017/2018. Comments are invited on this proposal. More detailed information on this project will also be available on the Kootenai National Forest projects web page located here:

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/projects/kootenai/landmanagement/projects>. If you would like to discuss this proposal further or have suggestions or concerns regarding it, please contact Miles Friend, Project Leader, at the District office: (406) 295-4693.

Answer to * on page 3 is mule deer.

Forest Service Mission: To sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations.